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A CASE
OF
MOLLUSCUM SIMPLEX,

With Illustrations.

BY

JOHN A. OCTERLONY, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA, THERAPEUTICS AND CLINICAL MEDICINE IN THE
LOUISVILLE MEDICAL COLLEGE, AND IN THE KENTUCKY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, ETC., ETC.

REPRINTED FROM THE "ARCHIVES OF DERMATOLOGY" — JULY, 1875.



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1875.

A CASE OF MOLLUSCUM SIMPLEX WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY JOHN A. OCTERLONY, M. D.

Professor of Materia Medica, Therapeutics and Clinical Medicine in the Louisville Medical College, and in the Kentucky School of Medicine, &c., &c.

WRITERS on Dermatology, and observers of widest experience in this specialty, very generally agree that well-marked cases of molluscum simplex are far from common. However, it is not only on account of the rarity of the disease I am induced to publish this case, but because it presented the most exaggerated developments of molluscum simplex I have ever seen. Tilbury Fox quotes a case recorded by Prof. Ebert, of a man who had 107 tumors. In the last edition of his work on diseases of the skin, he mentioned another case which he saw at Prof. Von Hebra's clinic in Vienna. In this the whole body was covered by the tumors which were of all sizes. The wood-cut illustrating this article certainly displays a very well-marked case, but I believe in the instance here reported by me the tumors were more numerous than in either of the cases mentioned above, and were not only of all sizes, but furnished specimens of all varieties of shapes that have ever been described.

The patient, *Martha Clay*, was a negro woman, a widow, and by occupation a cook. She believed herself to be about 60 years of age, had been twice married, and had borne eleven children. Her health had been remarkably good through life, and she could not recollect having ever been seriously sick. She had known both her parents and grandparents, but all of them were entirely free from this affection. Her children have also enjoyed the same immunity except the youngest, who, at the time she first came under my observation, was 22 years of age. A year or two had passed since she had last seen him, but at that time the tumors were not so numerous on his as on her own body.

The disease first showed itself when she was about 11 years old, and the first tumor appeared on the posterior aspect of the left

shoulder, and finally became one of the largest growth on her body, there being only two exceeding it in size. From this starting point they began to spread in every direction, until, as shown in the accompanying wood-cuts, they invaded almost every region of the skin.

The tumors were never painful, and the disfigurement and inconvenience of their presence were the only causes of her complaining of them. Those growing on the hairy scalp occasionally rendered it difficult for her to comb her hair, and she would then have one or two of the largest and most inconvenient excrescences snipped off with scissors. This gave sufficient opportunity for examining their structure, which was repeatedly done.

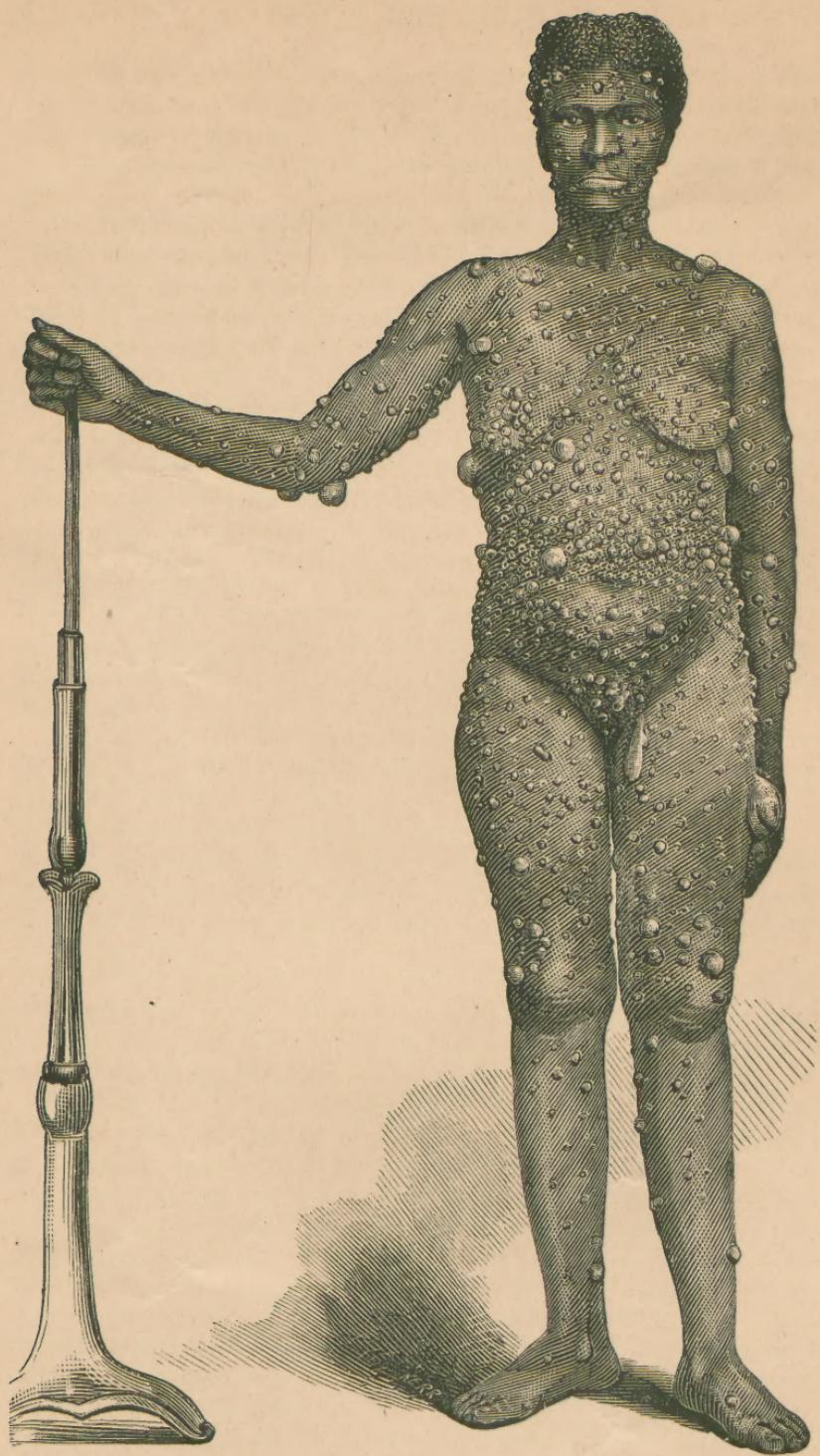
On the back they were most numerous, next the chest and abdomen, next the scalp and face in proportion to the surface. On the lower extremities the tumors were more numerous than on the upper; the anterior surface was not so thickly covered as the posterior. The buttocks and hips were comparatively free, and so, though in a less degree, were the extremities, especially the forearms and legs. The external genitals were covered with small tumors, and one of larger size was of such form and dimensions as to look somewhat like a penis. In the wood-cut it has been placed by the artist a little too far to the left side.

The soles of the feet were perfectly free, and so were the palms of the hands, except on the right, where a globular tumor was situated very near the wrist.

The tumors varied from the size of a mustard seed to that of a hen's egg. The greatest diversity was noted as to texture and form, hard and soft, smooth, rough and corrugated, pisiform and pyriform, pendulous and sessile, globular, ovoid and lobulated, these and other shapes were all represented.

In order to ascertain the number of tumors, the surface of the body was marked off into regions with chalk, and these again into smaller sections. The tumors situated in each were then counted, with the following results:

There were, on the face and ears, 55 tumors; on the anterior aspect of the neck, 30; on the chest, 300; on the abdomen, 348; on the anterior aspect of the right upper extremity, 51; on the anterior aspect of the left upper extremity, 35; on the anterior aspect of the right lower extremity, 118; on the anterior aspect of the left lower extremity, 104; on the scalp 47; on the posterior aspect of the neck, 30; on the posterior aspect of the right upper extremity, 22; on the posterior aspect of the left upper extremity, 20; on the posterior aspect of the right lower extremity, 62; on the posterior aspect of the left lower extremity, 52; on the back, 1059. The total number of tumors counted was 2,333, but this falls short of the reality, as many of the smallest were covered by the larger ones.



and not included. The accompanying wood-cut, though a quite faithful copy of the photograph, taken during life, does not, at first sight, convey an adequate impression of the excessively large number of these tumors.

Microscopic examination showed that the tumors were composed, in great part, of connective tissue, with masses of nucleated cells collected between the meshes. In some specimens the sebaceous glands were enlarged and their sacci separated, so as to present a racemose appearance. In others, these glands had become so compressed by the growth of connective tissue, that they were atrophied and destroyed.

The patient remained under observation for several years, during which time she was exhibited to numerous classes of medical students. Shortly before Christmas, and while intoxicated, she fell down the stairs and broke her back. Being unable to move, and alone in the house, she lay in the hall throughout the night, and, when found in the morning, she had perished from cold. At the time of her death she was about 64 years of age.





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